Vol. VIII. Numb. 81

THE OBSERVATOR.

On Dr. Sacheverell's *Sermon at* Derby *Aſſizes*, Aug. 15. 1709. *call'd* The Communication of Sin. *His unjuſt Charge upon the Government of Church and State; and his malicious Slanders againſt the Societies of Reformation.*

From Saturday, November 5. to Wednesday, November 9. 1709.

Country-m. PRAY, Maſter, give me your Opinion of Dr. *Sacheverell*'s Sermon, call'd *The Communication of Sin*, preach'd at *Derby* Aſſizes, *Aug.* 15. 1709. and lately publiſh'd at *the Requeſt of the Grand Jury*; for it makes a mighty Noiſe.

Obſ. That's the End for which 'twas preach'd and publiſh'd, *Roger*. Nor are we to wonder at it; for that Reverend Doctor was one of the firſt who hung out the red Flag againſt moderate Church-men and Diſſenters, when the occaſional Bill and Tack was on Foot; and the Party has been ſo troubl'd with the overflowing of the Gall ever ſince, that they cannot forbear their bitter Reflexions againſt the Queen and Parliament, becauſe their Deſign miſcarry'd. This Sermon, and its Dedication to the high Sheriff and Grand Jury of the County of *Derby*, is an uncontrovertible Inſtance of it; for here the Doctor makes bold to give the Queen and Parliament the Lie. They have both declar'd the Church to be in no Danger, yet, if we believe the Doctor, *the Intereſts of our Church and Conſtitution, are now ſhamefully betray'd, and run down, by ſecret Malice and open Violence: But tho' the Truth ſeems to be ſo much forſaken at preſent*, ſays he, *and tho' the Age is ſunk into the loweſt Dregs of Corruption, and cannot endure ſound Doctrine, yet they ſhall find, that we have ſtill among us thoſe who have Courage to ſpeak it, and Lives and Fortunes to maintain it.* I can look upon this to be nothing leſs, *Roger*, than the Sounding of an Alarm to raiſe the Church againſt the State, and a Proof, that the Doctor and his Party have been enrolling their Forces for that End. 'Tis certainly one of the moſt audacious Reflexions upon the Government, and one of the moſt daring Threats, that has lately appear'd in Print. The Doctor, and other Clergy-men of his Kidney, inſtead of being Ambaſſadors of the Prince of Peace, are become Heralds, to declare War againſt all that are not as mad as themſelves. To ſay, that *the Intereſts of the Church and Conſtitution* are ſhamefully betray'd, is one of the heavieſt Charges that can be brought againſt thoſe who are entruſted with the *Preſervation* of 'em; therefore it ought to have been very well prov'd, and the Truth of it paſt all Manner of Doubt, before it had been ſo boldly declar'd from the Pulpit and Preſs, and Lives and Fortunes enroll'd to ſupport it.

Country-m. I long to know how our Arch-biſhops, Biſhops, and the reſt of the Clergy, will digeſt this Charge, Maſter. They are a great and a numerous Body, and by the 8th of *Eliz.* Cap. 1. declar'd *to be one of the greateſt States of the Realm.* They muſt therefore be highly criminal in the Eyes of God and Man, and not only Enemies to the Church, but Traytors to the State, of which they make ſo great a Part, if the Doctor's Charge be true.

Obſ. You argue very juſtly, *Roger*; for they have not only 26 Biſhops in the Houſe of Lords, but every benefic'd Clergy-man has a Vote in chuſing Commoners, and the Church has her Convocations alſo for her Security. 'Tis ſtrange then, that our Biſhops and Clergy ſhould have ſuch Opportunities to know every Thing tranſacted in Parliament, Convocation, and Council, and ſo much Power to oppoſe what may be attempted to the Detriment of the Church, and yet ſhould be ſo far wanting to their own Intereſt, as to take no Notice of ſuch open Violence againſt her, as the Doctor complains of.

Country-m. This muſt either make them unaccountably blind, and abominably treacherous, Maſter, or is a plain Proof, that the Doctor and his Party are given up to ſeditious and ſplenetick Viſions, for which the Government both of Church and State ſeem to be under a Neceſſity to think of a ſpeedy Cure.

Obſ. I think your Obſervation to be very good, *Roger*, and that the Arch-biſhops, Biſhops, and Body of our Clergy, are concern'd, for their own Vindication, to obviate this unjuſt Clamour, and to cenſure the Slanderer; for this Charge gives the World a horrid *Idea* of the Church of *England*, and is quite contrary to the general Opinion of them, *viz.* That ſhe never had a more learned and pious Set of Biſhops, than ſhe has been bleſs'd with ſince the Revolution, and that there never was a Time when ſhe was adorn'd with Divines of more Moderation, Learning, and Piety; which makes them juſtly valu'd even by ſuch as diſſent from them. This has not a little contributed to allay thoſe Heats and Animoſities that were nouriſh'd betwixt them and the Diſſenters in the late arbitrary Reigns, on Purpoſe to deſtroy both, and to make their Diviſions a Handle for introducing Popery and Slavery. King *William* and his Parliaments were ſo ſenſible of thoſe Deſigns, that they enacted a Toleration, as the *beſt Means to procure an Union among Proteſtants.* Her Majeſty has follow'd the ſame Meaſures, and declar'd the Toleration ſhall be inviolable; yet, by what ſecret Influence God knows, you ſee the reſtleſs Faction have rais'd a hideous Noiſe againſt it, and libel her Majeſty, her Miniſtry, and her Parliaments, as *Encouragers of Schiſm, and Eſtabliſhers of a Rebellion like that of* Korah: But every Body elſe is of a contrary Opinion, and with very good Reaſon; for our Princes and Parliaments ſince the Revolution, have demonſtrably ſhew'd themſelves to be true nurſing Fathers and Mothers to the Church, and by a generous Compaſſion, have done what they could to heal thoſe unnatural Diviſions among Proteſtants, which Popiſh and arbitrary Courtiers had ſo induſtriouſly fomented. This is a convincing Proof, *Roger*, that they have the Bowels of Parents, and that the virulent Faction are not true Friends of the Church, but falſe Pretenders, like *Solomon*'s Harlot, who would have the Child divided, and cut aſunder. No Man who is not given up to intemperate Fury and Rage, can doubt this, *Roger*, if we conſider, that the Legiſlature have, by the Toleration-Act, liſted all the Diſſenters in *England* under the Church's Banner, for the Defence of her Doctrine, and the Canon of the Scripture, which ſhe has declar'd to be the Rule of her Faith and Manners, and has accordingly enjoin'd her Clergy to teach nothing to be neceſſary for Salvation, but what is deducible from it. This is ſuch a Security, as the Church of *England* never had before; ſhe could not poſſibly know well, 'till now, what Diſſenters taught, nor be fully acquainted with

the Standard of their Doctrine, which they all declare to be the same with her's; and the Doctor may depend upon it, that as they have voluntarily listed themselves under the same Banner, they will be more ready to defend the establish'd Doctrine of the Church with their Lives and Fortunes, than he and his high-flying Brethren, who give her Articles up by wholesale, and sign them only as Articles of Peace, but not as the Articles of their own Faith. He may be equally assur'd, that those Lives and Fortunes are at the Service of the Queen and Government against all Attempts to introduce Popery and Slavery, to set aside the *Hannover* Succession, or to bring in the Pretender.

Country-m. Pray, Master, give me your Opinion of what the Doctor has said against the Societies of Reformation, pag. 8, 10, *&c.* for that makes a mighty Noise too; he could not have pleas'd the Palates of our Debauchees better than he has done in those Paragraphs. He tells us, pag. 8. 'We are 'not under the *sanctify'd Pretence of Reformation of* 'Manners to turn Informers, assume an odious and 'factious Office, arrogantly intrench upon others 'Christian Liberty and Innocence, and under the 'Shew of more Zeal and Purity, *the most infallible* 'Token of a dexterous and refin'd Hypocrite and Knave, 'turn the World upside down, and set all Mankind into Quarrels and Confusions. And pag. 10. he seems to charge them 'with erecting illegal 'Inquisitions, which, he says, are the base Product of ill Nature, spiritual Pride, Censoriousness, and *sanctify'd SPLEEN*, pretending to carry on the *blessed Work of Reformation* by lying, 'whispering, backbiting, and tale-bearing, the most 'express Character of the Devil, who is emphatically stil'd the grand Accuser of the Brethren; that 'they are Busy-Bodies in other Mens Matters, whom 'the Apostle justly ranks with Murderers, Thieves, 'and Malefactors, as the most proper Persons to 'keep one another Company.

Obs. I could hardly have believ'd, without reading it, that any Clergy-man should have so much forgot his own Character, *Roger*. I would advise the Doctor to examine his own Conscience throughly, and to consider, whether he has not been acted by the grand Accuser of the Brethren in the Slanders above-mention'd, and particularly in this upon the Societies of Reformation, whom, without any Distinction, he has charg'd in such a general and unchristian Manner, as reflects more Disgrace upon himself, than all his bitter and ill-grounded Reproaches cast upon them. I am asham'd to hear a Man of Education argue at so loose and incoherent a Rate. Can any criminal Law in the State, or Canon against Disorders in the Church, be put in Execution without Information of the Crime? Then how came an Informer to be such an odious and factious Office of it self? Does not he act the Part of an Informer in this very Sermon?

Country-m. Yes, Master, I am sure he does; and of a factious and odious one too, if a Slanderer be such.

Obs. Without Informers, *Roger*, our Judges, in all criminal Cases, might shut up their Courts, and our Acts of Parliament against Crimes of State, or Vice, would signify no more than waste Paper. Every penal Law carries the Subject's Duty of informing against the Breakers of it in its Bosom, and every Command of the Decalogue does the like; so that to say, without Distinction, as the Doctor does, that Informers assume an odious and factious Office, is to strike at the Root of all Laws, divine and human, to turn Church and State into Anarchy, and to bring the World into Confusion; so much has his Passion got the Ascendant over his Reason. His Attack upon Religion, is no less evident; for we are commanded by our Saviour himself *to let our Light shine before Men*; and how this can be done, without a *Shew of more Zeal and Purity*, than the Generality of the World have, especially in this *degenerate Age*, which; the Doctor says, *is so much sunk into the Dregs of Corruption, that it cannot endure sound Doctrine*, let him see to it. I suppose he would be very unwilling we should take his Shew of more Zeal and Purity than others, to be *an infallible Token that he is a dexterous and refin'd Hypocrite and Knave*; yet thus he argues against the Societies of Reformation, without the least Distinction betwixt a false Pretence, and a real Zeal. His applying the Epithete of *Sanctify'd* to *Villany*, pag. 6. to a *Pretence of Reformation*, pag. 8. and to *Spleen*, pag. 10. looks so like the Language of a Rake, that I am asham'd it should ever have been pronounc'd by any Divine.

But to return to the Societies of Reformation, whom he compares to the *Devil himself, to Murderers, Thieves, and Malefactors*, and charges 'em with setting *up illegal Inquisitions*, pag 10. what could he have said more to animate Ruffians to murder all the rest, as they have already done some of 'em? Does this look like the Spirit of the Gospel? Or is it consistent with what he himself has said against being Partakers of other Mens Sins, and of the Ways how we may become guilty of them? His Charge that they set up *illegal Inquisitions*, is a manifest Calumny and Slander: All Constables are impower'd to call for Assistance to take up such Criminals; then how can it be illegal for any Man voluntarily to offer that Assistance, which the Officer has a Power to demand? 'Tis very well known, that the Societies for Reformation do nothing of that Nature, without Officers of the Peace, and they are so far from erecting Courts of Inquisition, that the Criminals taken up by their Endeavours, are carry'd before the proper Magistrates, and prosecuted in the ordinary Courts of Justice. They have likewise been so far from intrenching upon the Magistrate's Power in doing this, that besides the general Warrant of the Law, they have had the particular Invitation of the Government in Proclamations against Immorality and Profaneness, especially in that *Letter of the late Queen* Mary, *of glorious Memory, to the Justices of Peace in the County of* Middlesex, July 9. 1691. *for the suppressing of Profaneness and Debauchery*; wherein her Majesty orders them 'to *encourage all Constables, 'Church-wardens, Headboroughs, and all other Officers 'and PERSONS WHATSOEVER*, to do their Part 'in their several Stations, by timely and impartial *INFORMATIONS* and Prosecutions against 'all such Offenders, for preventing of such Judgments which are solemnly denounc'd against the 'Sins above-mention'd. But more of this another Time.

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LONDON, Printed by *H. Meere*, and sold by *B. Bragge* in *Pater-Noster-Row*. 1709.